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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 2922  
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1135  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TIRANA 000599

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DEPT FOR EUR/SCE (BENEDICT, SAINZ)  
NSC FOR BRAUN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/05/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER: RAISE NUMBER OF TROOPS IN  
AFGHANISTAN; REDUCE DEPLOYMENT IN BOSNIA

Classified By: Ambassador Marcie B. Ries for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Defense Minister Mediu told Ambassador that he wanted to expand Albania's troop presence in Afghanistan from 22 troops to a company of 120 and that he further wanted them to be deployed with Italian, rather than Turkish, forces so that they could conduct a broader range of missions and better their NATO capability. Mediu hopes to raise this issue with SecDef Rumsfeld during meetings June 7-8 in Brussels. Mediu also said that Albanian forces in Bosnia should be minimized because their current role was not active enough and thus not preparing them for NATO. Mediu also criticized the Greeks for disinterring bones of Greek soldiers without fully consulting his Ministry. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador and ODC's outgoing and incoming chiefs met with Defense Minister Mediu and Chief of General Staff Qazimi on May 31. Mediu said he wanted to shift the deployment of Albanian troops in Afghanistan. (Note: Currently, the Albanians have 22 troops from the Rapid Reaction Brigade deployed under a Turkish company-sized unit.) Mediu said the Turkish troops were conscripts and that there were many caveats attached to the missions the joint unit could perform. These issues combined, he said, to produce a deployment where the Albanian troops were not doing useful work and were not learning how to become NATO interoperable.

¶3. (C) Mediu indicated he wanted not only to shift the deployment, but also to enlarge it to a company-sized unit (approximately 120 personnel). Mediu said the ideal deployment would be with an Italian battalion because the Italians were already heavily involved with the training of Albania's Rapid Reaction Brigade and there would not be the caveats that come with the Turkish deployment.

¶4. (C) On Bosnia, Mediu said he wanted to decrease the deployment to the EUFOR Althea mission (currently 70 troops from the Rapid Reaction Brigade). Mediu and Qazimi explained that the Althea mission was not demanding at the moment and the troops were not progressing in their training to reach either NATO standards or preparedness for more demanding deployments in the GWOT. Mediu acknowledged the political difficulties involved, as the deployment in Bosnia was with a German unit.

¶5. (C) Mediu mentioned that he was still in discussions with JFC Naples Commander Admiral Ulrich to define Albania's participation in Operation Active Endeavor. He said he would like to have Albanian naval officers as observers on Italian NATO ships.

¶6. (C) Mediu confirmed his participation in a meeting of all Defense Ministers involved in deployments to Afghanistan 7-8 June in Brussels, which Secretary Rumsfeld is expected to attend. Mediu said, provided he had the opportunity, he intended to raise the following points with Secretary Rumsfeld:

- Re-deployment of Albanian troops in Afghanistan (as noted above).
  - A second deployment of SEEBRIG to Afghanistan when the current six-month deployment is up.
  - The Southeast European Defense Ministerial (SEDM) in Albania in September.
- RIES